



Poverty rates and food relief demand are higher in our regional and rural communities

Australian communities have people that are really doing it tough, particularly people in remote and regional areas of Australia and in many instances, single mothers and their children.

– Russell Broadbent, Liberal MP in forward to [Living on the Edge](#), Parliamentary Inquiry published February 2019.

The ACOSS/UNSW [Poverty in Australia 2018](#) finds that poverty is higher (at 13.8% using the 50% of median income poverty line) among people living outside capital cities than among those who live in them (12.8%).

Foodbank's [Hunger Report 2018](#) found that people in the bush are 33% more likely to have accessed food relief in the past 12 months compared with people in the city. 1.5 million people in regional Australia accessed food relief in 2018 alone.

Anglicare NT stated the following in their submission to the [Senate Inquiry into the adequacy of Newstart](#):

The cost of living in the Northern Territory is high. Food, electricity, transport and rent all feature as some of the highest in the country. The Household Expenditure Survey shows NT Households spend more on goods and services per week than anywhere else in the country. For remote communities, the cost is even higher. For example, a healthy food basket costs 60% more from remote stores than urban supermarkets.

Disadvantage is more prevalent and persistent in regional and remote parts of Australia... all the population groups at higher risk of poverty and social disadvantaged are present in greater proportion in rural areas.

– National Rural Health Alliance submission to the [Living on the Edge](#) inquiry.

In the bush we're even more sympathetic to people experiencing poverty

Australians are much more aware of and sensitive and sympathetic to poverty and people experiencing poverty than some politicians and commentators believe. An Ipsos survey conducted in June 2018 for Anglicare Australia and published in their [State of the Family 2018](#) found high levels of compassion towards people experiencing poverty, and that most believe people should not experience poverty in Australia.

More than 4 in 5 people agreed that nobody deserves to live in poverty and that Australia should be a country that looks after those in need. People in rural and regional Australia have even stronger empathy than those in metropolitan locations. Nearly two thirds of people in rural areas said that there are no differences between them and those experiencing poverty, compared with just over a half of people living in metropolitan areas.



Unemployment and low Newstart payments bite hard in our regional and rural communities

Unemployment is often higher in rural communities

“In regional and rural areas there is often not the availability and opportunities of a vibrant job market compared to city areas. Housing costs to live in the city have become unaffordable, and as a result many people have been forced to the regional areas in search for cheaper housing. However, this also means that there are fewer job opportunities in these areas.”

– The Salvation Army’s submission to the [Living on the Edge](#) inquiry.

Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 were more likely to be employed the closer they lived to major cities (54% compared with 31% in Very remote areas) according to [Australia’s Welfare 2019](#).

Stories of Newstart poverty from regional Australia

David Tennant, CEO of Shepparton Family Care said in an [ABC Interview](#) earlier this year that Newstart which has not risen in real terms in 25 years, is devastating rural and regional communities, where unemployment was widespread, and had become a structural level of poverty almost impossible to escape. Mr Tennant said many Australians could not survive on Newstart alone and had to resort to family or emergency outreach — a problem that harmed single women with children more than other demographics.

“It’s just a bizarre, slightly cruel conundrum that we’re requiring people to go to government funded agencies to get emergency relief, when what really should be happening is they’re paid a respectful amount of money that they can constantly survive on.”

– David Tennant, CEO of Shepparton Family Care

Lisa is a mother living on Newstart in regional Tasmania. She is often employed in casual work due to health and other issues. This leaves Lisa and her son unable to pay for basic living expenses such as power bills, rent or food. She regularly experiences threats of electricity disconnection. Feeling tired, hungry, cold and stressed are becoming the norm for Lisa and her son. Cited in Uniting Vic/Tas submission to the [Senate Inquiry into the adequacy of Newstart](#).

Increasing Newstart would be an economic boost for regional and rural Australia

Deloitte Access Economics [Analysis of the impact of raising benefit rates](#), found a \$75 a week increase in Newstart and associated allowances (described by them as a ‘catch up increase’) would have a strong fairness and prosperity dividend. Adding \$10 a day to the existing base rate of unemployment benefits would cost \$3.3 billion, but would create a bigger economy and also would help the regional economies most in need of help.



FAST FACTS

Poverty in Rural & Regional Australia



anti-poverty week

act on poverty

Health outcomes are worse in the bush

National Rural Health Alliance say there are 7 million people in rural and remote Australia experience who experience:

1.3x

burden of disease

Up to
2x

rate of preventable
hospitalisations

Up to
2.5x

rate of preventable
deaths

40%

higher suicide rate

50%

less spent on
mental health

There's an avalanche of chronic disease emerging in rural and remote Australia. If you look at diabetes, mental health, obesity, cardiovascular disease, deaths from cancer, suicide responses to mental health, all of those have increased compared to what we see in the cities.

– Dr Paul Worley, Rural Health Commissioner speaking on the [7.30 Report – regional health](#), 3/7/19

According to the Royal Far West Annual Report 2017-18, children living in rural and remote areas of Australia are up to 5 times as likely as children living in urban areas to have challenges with their developmental health and greater difficulty getting the support they need.

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For more, see Poverty in Australia on our website at www.antipovertyweek.com.au

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